

Japan Christian Activity News

#490 - February 13, 1976

IN THIS ISSUE:

Report from Okinawa
Conference on Theological Education
NCC Statement on the CIA
Group calls for Asylum

REPORT FROM OKINAWA -- "A TRIP TO CONSIDER PEACE"

by David Satterwhite, Quaker International

A homemade Okinawan meal for Christmas dinner was only the first new experience in a series of four eventful days shared by the participants in a "trip to think about peace." Organized by the Japan branch of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), a worldwide affiliation of individuals and church groups engaged in peace-work. The on-site arrangements had been made by four Okinawan FOR members. In a spirit of common concern for the lack of in-depth understanding of Okinawa's situation, it was these four who had invited mainland Japanese at the all-Japan FOR Conference held in Hiroshima last August. The response was overwhelming: the planners thought that twenty might be interested enough to make the trip during their year-end holidays, but twice that number applied and came. As pre-trip orientation, a mimeographed book-list was circulated, introducing that history, culture, and assorted social problems to the motley group, which ranged in age from 14 to over 70.

On the morning after Christmas, enroute to the Ocean Expo site from our hill-side lodging, everyone marvelled at the island's coastline and unseasonably mild weather. The previous evening's self-introduction had established that few were drawn to Okinawa by the year-long advertising campaign for Expo '75, but our hosts included it as an integral part of this educational encounter. Only later would we understand their feelings, for Expo had come to represent many of Okinawa's pervasive contradictions, and most visible among them, the island's economic plight. As an attraction for nearly 1.5 million visitors, the glitter of its temporary, modernistic facilities and man-made beach indicated both the enormous expense which made it possible, and something of the intentions of those who had planned it.

Billed as the "sparkplug of the Okinawan economy," the fair had spurred widespread development: mainland corporations began investing heavily in local property and built impressive pavilions illustrating their efforts to live harmoniously with nature. Local authorities discovered one leisure-industry firm bulldozing whole pineapple fields in its eagerness to avoid new zoning regulations designed to protect the fragile agricultural economy. Across the island, with less sparkle and concern for ecological balances than they advertise, two oil consortiums proceeded with construction of crude oil central terminal storage (CTS) facilities, proven to have already disrupted the marine life in Kin Bay.

The local economy has not walked away from Expo with its pockets full of profits. Initial plans promised twice the number of tourists as actually showed up, and the Okinawan response, fostered by optimistic officials, was private investment in Expo-related industries. Borrowing heavily from banks, many people built small-scale hotels, restaurants, and souvenir shops, or expanded bus and sea-routes to the fairgrounds. Not only did they lose all of their customers to the large-scale mainland investors, but there are no solutions in sight for either individual debtors or for the expected "post-Expo" economic slump. Now that the show is over, its success

(cont'd)

EDITORS:

Subscriptions: JAPAN ¥1,500; OVERSEAS Airmail \$8.00, Seadmail \$6.00

John Nakajima, Jim Stenzel, Lee Seaman NATIONAL CHRISTIAN COUNCIL Room 24, 3-18 Nishiwaseda 2-chome Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 160 Japan

NOTE: Permission to reprint is granted to all media on conditions that (1) full credit is given and (2) a copy is sent to the editors.

OKINAWA (cont'd)

can be best be evaluated among Okinawans by their deepened distrust for mainland investors and the tourist mentality.

A disturbing irony of Expo '75 was the view of *Iejima* island it provided across a five-kilometer channel, and the use of the picturesque scene as an advertising lure. The initiation our group received on *Iejima*, to both the arbitrary use of state powers, and the humble strength within non-violent resistance, had the most profound effect on us all. Our teacher there was AHAGON Shokō, author of a thin book entitled *Geigun to Nomin* (Farmers vs. the U.S. Military - Iwanami Press), and in his early 70's still dynamically active in the struggle the book so clearly portrays.

The WW-II role of Okinawa is well-documented: how the island was laid waste at immense loss of life, both military and civilian, as a last line of Imperial Japan's defenses. The island's strategic importance was verified anew throughout the Vietnam War, as the scene of B-52 bombing missions and shipment of troops and material. Less well known is the resistance to that role, originating first with the Korean War. In 1954 the U.S. military began extensive acquisition of new land on Okinawa by force. Its plans called for the use of *Iejima* as a practice bombing range, so surveyors arrived to redistribute the land -- to the military. But the residents said *no* to those plans, and have said *no* ever since.

"To begin with, we did not know the tactics of opposition, how to conduct a sit-in, for instance -- but we met the military with simple hearts, as humans," says Ahagon. In the early negotiations, the military insisted that its role was to defend Okinawa. His reply: "What does America lack -- you have land, roads, H-bombs -- why do you want our little island too? Can you claim to protect the flock if you sacrifice the one stray sheep?" But the same military which listened to the farmers' sincere arguments, parting with handshakes, later came for their land, burning their homes, and forcing many out. The code of ethics drafted by the farmers for their resistance was learned step-by-step, as were their methods. Included were stipulations against even raising voices during negotiations, and to come in a spirit of helping the military realize its own destructive role. Twenty-two years later the farmers remain adamantly non-violent, and have succeeded in restricting military use to less than 30% of *Iejima*. On the walls of a "Unity Hall" facing the bombing range -- a symbol of their resistance -- we found strong words of advice for America: "Those who live by the sword shall die by the sword -- A nation which maintains bases will be destroyed by them."

Ahagon's is a story of faith in action. He has learned through the death of friends in the fields where they worked, struck down by stray practice bombs, that "the treaties and agencies of defense are built on false premises, but we are trying to build our lives and society on the values of peaceful human relations." Those "treaties and agencies" also remain. Since Okinawa's reversion to Japan in May 1972, only 19% of land held by the U.S. military has been returned, and while the Japan Self Defense Forces have moved in to "defend" the domestic situation, the U.S. arsenal stands poised in Okinawa and Micronesia within easy reach of Korea, Taiwan, China, and the Philippines.

Military matters are but one portion of the lessons learned on the FOR trip. The size of our group allowed for seminars on the problems of the economy, education, agriculture, and women's issues. Most of them come back to the military role, however, for under both U.S. and Japanese rule, each of the inter-related problems is secondary to the strategic demands of this "Keystone of the Pacific." The Japanese government now foots most of the bill for military land leases, at prices which make sugar-cane cultivation less profitable. Further, with no financial guarantee for either the sugar-cane or pineapple crops, which together comprise 72% of Okinawan agricultural production, the entire economic base is

(cont'd)

OKINAWA (cont'd)

dependent on fluctuations in the mainland.

Is the present situation anything like that which the Okinawan people wanted from reversion to Japan? They are certainly aware of being part of something much larger than themselves; an entity which treats them to some extent as just another prefecture. Yet there is now, as there has been for ten if not thirty years, a dilemma of identity as well.. It is a loss to their distinctiveness as a society and culture to be treated as part of Japan, for they see now that the economic determinants of the mainland may swallow their historical autonomy. Since reversion, mainland cultural insensitivity has led to a new form of colonialism, and for a colonized people long steeped in political consciousness, this may be an unbearably frustrating relationship.

A few attempts to systematically exchange views and maintain an active dialogue between mainland and Okinawan peoples, begun in 1970, broke down within a few years. The Okinawan participants were fatigued by the complexity of their island's problems and plagued by the apparent inability of their mainland counterparts to grasp those problems constructively. For mere sympathy is not enough. FOR's recent trip indicates there is a mutual concern to restore understanding, and gives promise that a rethinking of the relationship is in order. The Okinawan people deserve more than an Expo praising questionable accomplishments of the human role in nature -- they deserve respect for lessons they can teach mainland Japanese, and all of us, in peaceful human relations.

* * * * *

CONFERENCE ON THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

by Tadashi Miyabe, National Committee of the Japan YMCA

WHAT IS MINISTRY TODAY?--not a new question, but a continuing one for churches seeking relevant form and substance for their ministry in the world. It was asked again January 8-10 at Karuizawa, where the Theological Education Committee of the NCC-J Division of Education sponsored its third Conference on Theological Education.

The conference centered on the theme, "Who is a Theological Educator? Diversity of Ministry and the Role of the Church." The more than forty participants, divided evenly between laypeople and clergy, included faculty members from several theological education institutions and denominational representatives, members from Christian lay organizations such as the Japan Overseas Medical Commission and the YMCA of Japan, and eleven seminary students. Resource persons were Dr. Kosuke Koyama of The University of Otago, New Zealand, Professor Yoshiro Ishida of the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Tokyo, and Mr. Shichihei Yamamoto, publisher and writer.

In the first session participants raised questions: What is the difference between clergy and laity? How is a theological education different from training clergy? Do the churches and seminaries trust each other? Is theological education equipping contemporary people to participate in God's mission? Is a school-type "theological education" even possible?

Strong calls also came at this session to put theological education in touch with the actual, historical experiences of the people of God and to emphasize indiginization, the relation of the gospel to local culture, in theological education. Clergy thus equipped can communicate the gospel's core to people both in and outside the church.

Delegates got specific, too. As education for the liberation of human beings,

(cont'd)

CONFERENCE (cont'd)

theological education should relate to immediate problems, they said. Some cited the Aoyama Gakuin case where the university, by terminating the theology department, prevented enrolled students from continuing their studies on the graduate level. And participants called for better relations between churches and seminaries, an open credit system among seminaries, and more cooperation with theological institutions and churches in Asia.

After these opening remarks, Professor Ishida looked at theological education from the viewpoint of the World Council of Churches Theological Education Fund, saying: 1) Theological education must live in tension with the church. In fact, this tension is the very source of direction for the church's mission. 2) Theological education must include *both* the training and continuing education of professional church leadership *and* a wider service to the whole people of God. 3) This education should be "both-and" rather than "either-or" in areas of universality-localism, deductive-inductive methods, and past-future orientation.

Theological education, he suggested, should lead to liberation towards and encounter with God. Flexibility is required. "Confession" must become "confessing." As education applies more and more to the entire people of God, clergy and laity will be seen as differing only in function rather than in position in a hierarchy.

This approach to theological education should particularly avoid limiting itself to a particular class or a given culture. The Gospel must be available to all, not trapped in class and culture bindings.

Dr. Koyama, speaking candidly out of his involvement with theological education throughout Asia, asked whether theological education today really provides students with opportunity for spiritual information and commitment. Students often know Biblical theology well, he said. But many are often utterly incapable of grasping how God in history challenged his people and demanded their obedience -- and what that means for us today.

Koyama quoted the famous story of Japan's turn-of-the-century naval hero, General Togo, who met the enemy on the stormy Japan Sea. Both ships moved up and down -- but the movement was not simultaneous, and so no shells reached their targets. Theologians should keep General Togo in mind, Koyama said, in thinking about Asia and westernization. Westernization differs in depth with each local situation, and changes in the world come rapidly. Observers who apply pre-purchased labels to a situation in flux may be led astray completely.

Participants were impressed by Koyama's visual summary of Marxism, Buddhism and Christianity, three world views which strongly influence Asia today. On one side, Lenin's clenched fist signified the rigidity of Marxist ideology. At the other extreme, the open, scooping palm of Buddha, fingers webbed so that not a single sinner will fall through, showed the domination of grace in Buddhist theology. The bleeding palm of Christ crucified exemplifies the "extraordinariness" of Jesus and sets Christianity apart from the other two, Koyama said. The palm, neither closed nor open, bears the agony of mankind. Through theological education we must recapture the meaning of this extraordinary Jesus and learn in an Asian context to approach each particular situation in terms of *Imitatio Christi*.

Commenting on Japan, the theologian saw a pressing need to recapture the uniqueness of Japanese culture. Because it surrounds us, he said, we are unaware of it and take it for granted. The Japanese people have a need for more "rootedness" in their own culture, for the most effectively rooted are in reality the most mobile.

Shichihei Yamamoto related traditional Japanese thought to the Bible's message.

(cont'd)

CONFERENCE (cont'd)

Historically, religious faith in Japan has been something for the weak, he pointed out. Shoin Yoshida, a classics scholar of the Tokugawa Period, suggested that Buddhism was good for women, children and the aged, and this general attitude prevails in a large part of Japanese society today. Japanese Christians need to recognize this and to demonstrate that it is only one of many attitudes. Further, past Japanese leaders have looked on religion as unrelated to organized thinking. To communicate, it is necessary to first break down both assumptions held by many Japanese.

Yamamoto drew on his editorial experience when he said Japanese have difficulty moving from the conception of an idea to its actualization. Frequently interesting ideas develop, but they never move beyond the idea state, he said. It can be like a never-ending staff meeting -- much interesting brainstorming, but nothing for publication.

The very core of Japanese culture challenges the gospel, he concluded. This core is nothing but the Emperor system, which functions even today as the absolute value structure for many Japanese. The churches and individual Christians need to see themselves as signposts within society, attempting to communicate the significance of the Christian message by breaking down the so-called "common sense" of Japanese who see religion as only something for the weak.

The conference benefited from a diversity of input. Laymen like Yamamoto and the eleven participating students focused attention on concrete issues in theological education; these might otherwise have been overlooked. The conference will contribute both to the disclosure and the healing of alienation in local congregations, so that clergy and laity may unite in Christ to become the agent of God's mission.

This alienation stems from the relation of laity and pastor in the local church. Members are cordial to the minister, ask his guidance, and are apparently content with their limited role as Christians in the church and in society. The problem springs from the minister's orientation. Rather than working to equip the whole congregation for mission, he tends to enjoy being treated as their Teacher. It is a common pattern in Japan's vertical society, where ruler and ruled, educator and students are not only clearly divided but also seen in a hierarchical relation.

Continuing dialogues like this gathering can break through the present inertia of theological institutions and theological education, especially in light of similar developments already taking place in secular institutions. (Waseda University, for example, has initiated a limited open credit system with Keio University at the graduate level.)

Meanwhile, small steps towards progress have come out of last year's meeting. At the initiative of Rikkyo (St. Paul's) University, a clinical counseling course at St. Luke's Hospital in Tokyo has been made available to other institutions for field work. Coordination of this project will be handled by the Division of Education, NCCJ, from this year on.

We have to take seriously the pressure of our common calling, based on our Lord's prayer that "they all may be one." Here in Japan the supposedly de-mythologized emperor system is resurgent thirty years after World War II. With the implications of the current tide as seen in the Yasukuni issue, we need to make utmost efforts to reshape theological education. It must become a viable process for equipping the equippers -- as animators, catalysts and bearers of education toward a critical consciousness. And this consciousness must be based both on listening to the Word and on discerning historical reality. Finally, the sponsoring body is significant. Under the present situation of the churches in this country, there are few places where a genuine encounter of this sort is feasible.

(Special thanks to John Reagan for his help in preparing report.)

REGARDING THE USE OF RELIGIOUS WORKERS AS SOURCES BY INTELLIGENCE GATHERING AGENCIES

This organization, the National Christian Council of Japan, is made up of national denominations of the Christian Church and other Christian organizations. As an organization we relate to churches and religious organizations from countries of many political systems.

On this date in regular session of our central committee we express our concern at the admission by the then director of the CIA, W. E. Colby, that "in many countries of the world representatives (sic) of the clergy, foreign and local, play a significant role and can be of assistance to the United States through the CIA..." (Letter of September 13, 1975, to Senator Mark Hatfield). This statement seems to say that some (unidentified) clergy are serving as agents of the U.S. government while performing their mission activities. In the same letter Mr. Colby also said, "...I believe that it would be neither necessary nor appropriate to bar any connection between CIA and the clergy and the churches."

The CIA has acted as a manipulator of mission personnel.

On the basis of the above facts and because of our concern that religious workers not be used as agents of government intelligence gathering activities, we make the following statements:

To All Governments Involved in Intelligence Gathering Activities:

We request that you cease and desist in the use of both expatriate and national religious workers in clandestine intelligence gathering activities.

To All Missionary Sending Organizations:

We request that you adopt, as some sending organizations already have, policy statements to the effect that missionaries and other employees of your organizations shall not be knowing agents of intelligence gathering operations and that missionaries should be cautious so that they are not used as sources of intelligence information without their knowledge.

To All Bodies Receiving Foreign Religious Workers:

We request that you adopt policy statements repudiating the cooperation of expatriate workers sent to work with you being used by intelligence gathering agencies.

To All Missionaries from Overseas Serving in Japan and Missionaries from Japan Serving Overseas:

The CIA has declared its intention to continue using overseas missionaries and clergy. President Ford's counsel, Philip W. Buchen, in a letter to Senator Hatfield (November 5, 1975) reported that "the President does not feel it would be wise at present to prohibit the CIA from having any connection with the clergy. Clergymen throughout the world are often valuable sources of intelligence..."

We request you not to jeopardize the integrity of your Christian witness, or that of others, by participation knowingly in intelligence gathering activities of any sort and urge you to exercise caution to avoid being unknowingly used in such activity.

Adopted at the Tenth Meeting of the Central Committee of the National Christian Council of Japan, February 12, 1976.

Signed Takaaki Aikawa
Chairman

Signed John M. Nakajima
General Secretary